

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for sharing information over a computer network, comprising:

(a) receiving data regarding a particular investment over a computer network

5 from a first user computer;

(b) storing the data from the first user in a relational database and identifying the data as coming from the first user, wherein the first user is identified as a member of a hierarchy of sources organized by level of trustworthiness;

(c) receiving a request over the computer network from a second user for data
10 from the relational database regarding the particular investment; and

(d) in response to the request from the second user, transmitting the data from the relational database to a second user computer, wherein, absent a request from the second user for data from a specific source or level of trustworthiness, the data transmitted comprise data from users of the highest level of trustworthiness available.

15

2. A method as in claim 1, wherein the data received from the first user comprises alternative investment data.

3. A method as in claim 1, wherein sources of the highest level of trustworthiness
20 comprise investment managers, fund administrators, or fund sponsors.

4. A method as in claim 1, wherein sources of at least one level of trustworthiness comprise investors, and wherein the investor level is subdivided into two or more sublevels that are determined at least partly by reliability of previously submitted
25 information.

5. A method as in claim 1, wherein sources of at least one level of trustworthiness comprise investors, and wherein the at least one investor level is subdivided into two or more sublevels, and wherein an investor's sublevel is determined at least partly by
30 amount of demand for the investor's information by other investors.

6. A method as in claim 2, wherein the alternative investment data from the first user comprises fund data.

7. A method as in claim 6, further comprising a method for identifying unrecognized funds, comprising:

- (a) attempting to match an unrecognized fund with existing fund records;
- (b) if no match is found, searching existing fund records using a sounds-like function;
- (c) if no match is found by step (b), identifying the unrecognized fund as a new fund; and
- (d) if multiple matches are found by step (b), transmitting a list of the matches to the first user, with a request to identify the correct fund.

8. A system for sharing information over a computer network, comprising:

(a) means for receiving data regarding a particular investment over a computer network from a first user computer;

(b) means for storing the data from the first user in a relational database and identifying the data as coming from the first user, wherein the first user is identified as a member of a hierarchy of sources organized by level of trustworthiness;

(c) means for receiving a request over the computer network from a second user for data from the relational database regarding the particular investment; and

(d) means for, in response to the request from the second user, transmitting the data from the relational database to a second user computer, wherein, absent a request from the second user for data from a specific source or level of trustworthiness, the data transmitted comprise data from users of the highest level of trustworthiness available.

9. A system for sharing information over a computer network, comprising:

(a) a central database; and

(b) a central server linked to the central database and linked to a computer network;

wherein the central database is a relational database configured to identify at least some data with the source of the data; and

wherein each data source is designated as a member of a hierarchy of sources organized by level of trustworthiness.

10. A system as in claim 9, wherein data in the central database comprises alternative investment data.

11. A system as in claim 9, wherein sources of the highest level of trustworthiness comprise investment managers, fund administrators, or fund sponsors.

12. A system as in claim 9, wherein sources of at least one level of trustworthiness comprise investors, and wherein the at least one investor level is subdivided into two or more sublevels that are determined at least partly by reliability of previously submitted information.

13. A system as in claim 9, wherein sources of at least one level of trustworthiness comprise investors, and wherein the investor level is subdivided into two or more sublevels, and wherein an investor's sublevel is determined at least partly by amount of demand for the investor's information by other investors.

14. A method of obtaining and providing information regarding alternative investments, comprising the following steps:

(a) providing over a computer network in a secure manner to a central server data regarding one or more alternative investments, wherein the alternative investment data comprises financial data and information indicating at least one source of the financial data;

(b) requesting information regarding one or more alternative investments; and

(c) receiving information comprising the requested information;

wherein the central server is in communication with a central database that is a relational database configured to identify at least some data with the source of the data; and

wherein each data source is designated as a member of a hierarchy of sources organized by level of trustworthiness.

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